

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

“From my perspective, focusing on girls and women makes a great deal of sense because it is the fastest way to get money into the hands of children, family members, communities, and I think it is an obligation and responsibility.”

-- Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, January 2010

A number of studies over the past few years have shown that gender equality is “smart economics.” The untapped potential of women remains a lost opportunity for economic growth and development that the world can ill afford. Women’s economic participation promotes enterprise development at both the micro and small and medium enterprise (SME) levels, as well as enhancing business management and returns on investment.

Investing in women produces a multiplier effect – women reinvest up to 90 percent of their income in their families and communities. Women also play key roles in creating peaceful and stable societies – important factors for economic growth. Unfortunately, these benefits have not been universally recognized and have therefore not translated into women’s full economic participation. Women still face obstacles when trying to establish new businesses or expand existing ones. Among the biggest hurdles are discriminatory laws, regulations and business conditions, as well as women’s lack of access to property rights, as well as finance, training, technology, markets, mentors, and networks.



Women’s Economic Empowerment

Investments to advance women’s economic opportunity include:

- **Financial Inclusion:** Supporting efforts to increase women’s access to quality financial services, such as micro credit, savings, insurance, and payment systems through better regulation, technology, and financial literacy.
- **Capacity-Building:** Providing capacity-building, training, and mentoring programs to women and girls and equip them with training, access to markets, entrepreneurship opportunities, and the necessary skills to attain economic independence.
- **Enterprise Growth:** Supporting grassroots NGOs advocating for policy and fiscal solutions that enable women’s economic participation, including reforming discriminatory laws and practices that hinder access to capital, land tenure, and inheritance rights, and encouraging a policy climate conducive to the growth of women-run SMEs.

